Liberty

NOT THE DAUGHTER BUT THE MOTHER OF ORDER — PROUDHON

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"For always in thine eyes, O Liberty!
Shines that high light whereby the world is saved;
And though thou slay us, we will trust in thee."
JOHN HAY.

Filippina: or, "America" Up-To-Date.

Thy country 'tis for me!
We'll take the liberty
  To thee to cling.
Land where the panthers glide,
Land where the apes reside
On every mountain-side,
  To thee I sing.

We'll guard thy rocks and rills;
Thy "rocks" shall foot the bills;
  To thee we'll cling.
Land of the cocoanut,
We shout for freedom, but,
In every Tagal hut,
  Let's freedom wring!

James J. Dooling.

On Picket Duty.

The Russian government has prohibited the entrance into Russia of Stead's "War Against War" and the peace writings of the baroness von Suttner. "God bless the czar!" sings Ernest Crosby.

Wordsworth Donisthorpe, who has been spending some years in travel, has written a work entitled "Down the Streams of Civilization," which George Newnes has published. It should be reprinted here.

On the whole, the reception accorded by the daily press, especially by the more important papers in the large cities outside of New York and Boston, to "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" is, considering the tremendous prejudice prevalent against its author, surprisingly just and appreciative, going far to convince one that, after all, there is some good in Nazareth. The extracts collated elsewhere in this paper take up much room, but it is well to have them on record in one place for reference in the future, since the poem with which they deal is unquestionably a classic. They include the few contemptuous and wicked sneers as well as the many eulogies. Of course the Boston "Congregationalist's" curt dismissal of the ballad as one of which "neither subject nor verse is felicitous" is all that could be expected of the religious press, and, when the New York "Tribune" raises a discordant note in the chorus of praise by the sweeping assertion that the poem "has no merit," one can only reflect that the political fall of that journal from Horace Greeley to Whitelaw Reid is no greater than its literary fall from George Ripley to the obscurity of his successor. Against such verdicts it is not worth while to argue. More deserving of answer is the otherwise friendly review of the New Bedford "Standard," which questions the sincerity of the ballad because of its repetition of phrases with but slight variations. To the "Standard" critic the author seems more absorbed in his skill at effective word-grouping than in the subject of his poem. The same thing is hinted at by the critic (also friendly) of the Cincinnati "Commercial Tribune," while the impression made upon nearly all the other critics, notably those of the Pittsburg "Leader" and St. Paul "Pioneer-Press," is one of terrific earnestness and sincerity. If there is anything in the "Standard's" criticism, then every poet who writes a sonnet or chooses any other fixed form of verse, to which conformity can be had only by the exercise of workmanship, and indeed every prose writer who consciously makes the slightest effort to perfect his style, must be convicted of insincerity. I am curious to know the "Standard's" opinion of Flaubert, admittedly one of the most honest and earnest writers that ever lived, and yet one that would withhold a book from the press for an entire year in the hope of replacing a single word by one more nicely shaded to his purpose. One may indeed look upon such extremity of care as, on the whole, a waste, but to question the sincerity that prompts it would indicate the strangest inversion of vision. And to me, despite the mastery of technique that Wilde undoubtedly possesses, the marvellous ease and swing and flow and warmth of his "Ballad of Reading Gaol" mark it as one of those summits of achievement attained, even by genius, only in those hours of inspiration that follow tragic experiences.

A United States judge by the name of Jackson having been guilty of some high-handed action in the matter of a strike, Ernest H. Crosby suggests, in a letter to the New York "Times," that "men like Jackson should be lent to the czar of Russia." Which suggests to me this query: why does Mr. Crosby, after calling fervently, in his "War Echoes," on God to bless the czar, set God an example precisely the opposite in kind? And this, by the way, is a fitting place to point out that Tolstoï, unlike his American disciple, has no confidence in the sincerity of the czar's profession of the gospel of peace.

The vicious hypocrisy of journalism has rarely been more forcibly exhibited than in the newspapers' manner of dealing with the cowardice shown by the Seventy-First regiment in the Cuban campaign. The only New York paper that attempted to tell the story of this cowardice at the time was the "World." At this its rivals, the "Journal" and "Sun," pretending to be moved by patriotism, sent forth shrieks of simulated indignation that any one should brand the American soldier as a coward. This so heated the blood of thousands of militant stay-at-homes that a flood of angry protest poured into the office of the "World." Thus menaced, Pulitzer, in a fit of terror, executed a precipitate right-about-face, and started a fund for the building of a monument to the soldiers of the Seventy-First, whose cowardice he had exposed the day before. The war over, an investigation was had, as a result of which the truth of the charges of cowardice has been definitively and officially established. And now comes the "World," brave when there is nothing to fear, to tell us that it "was right all along," and to prove it by reprinting, beside the official verdict, its own statements of last summer and the rebukes administered and the denials vociferated by the "Journal" and "Sun" (omitting, of course, all mention of the monument fund, which has sunk out of sight). To this the "Journal" retorts that the fact that the charges were true only added to the infamy of preferring them; that, even though the entire army had shown arrant cowardice and all the newspapers knew it, it would have been the duty of every patriotic editor to suppress the facts in time of war. And this is the same "Journal" that is constantly heaping reproach, ridicule, and contumely upon France for pleading the *raison d'Etat* as an excuse for keeping innocent Dreyfus a prisoner on Devil's Island! But it remained for the "Evening Post" to present the most pitiable spectacle of all. In the middle of a paragraph gloating over the discomfiture of the "Journal" and the "Sun" and ridiculing the tortuous course of the "World," it declares that it was impossible to tell the truth about this matter last summer. Impossible, Godkin? Why impossible? You knew the facts, did you not? You could have written them, could you not? And surely you do not mean to tell us that your compositors would have refused to put them in type, or that your pressmen would have gone on strike, or that the newsboys would have declined to sell your paper? But why impossible, then? Impossible, of course, solely because of your *fear* that telling the truth would cripple or kill the "Evening Post," or, perhaps, cause your precious person to adorn a lamp-post. But why, then, denounce the soldier who shrinks from the battle through fear of wound or death? Where do you get your right to a monopoly of cowardice? Oh! Godkin, in all the cowardly pack of lying editors, you have the faintest heart and the meanest spirit.

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"*In abolishing rent and interest, the last vestiges of old-time slavery, the Revolution abolishes at one stroke the sword of the executioner, the seal of the magistrate, the club of the policeman, the gauge of the exciseman, the erasing-knife of the department clerk, all those insignia of Politics, which young Liberty grinds beneath her heel.*" — PROUDHON.

☞ The appearance in the editorial column of articles over other signatures than the editor's initial indicates that the editor approves their central purpose and general tenor, though he does not hold himself responsible for every phrase or word. But the appearance in other parts of the paper of articles by the same or other writers by no means indicates that he disapproves them in any respect, such disposition of them being governed largely by motives of convenience.

What is Anarchism?

Anarchism is the doctrine that government should be abolished. Everybody agrees to this, and, as everybody thinks he knows what government is, everybody thinks he knows what Anarchism is. Yet very few people can define government in such a way that they would not take back their definitions after being asked a few questions.

Anarchism is a theory of political science, and is opposed to government in the political sense. Government, in the political sense, is a human power which assumes and exercises a general control over the actions of all persons within certain recognized limits of territory or of race, enforcing this control by violence whenever necessary. The "government" of a c[illegible] church, or any other voluntary organization is not a political government, because it does not attempt to compel the obedience of all persons within any limit, but simply directs the actions of such as are willing to be directed; hence it is not opposed to Anarchistic principles.

What Anarchists regard as the essential and objectionable principle of government is the use of force to prevent a man from doing as he pleases. They (like most other people) would like to see a millennial period in which no force should be used against any man. But they (like most other people) recognize that that cannot be had at present—that some people will be violent, and others must decide whether to meet violence with violence. If a bully tries to duck me in the pond,—an act essentially governmental, though lacking the public organization of government as generally recognized,—and I violently resist him and thwart his will, is my action parallel to his?

Some Anarchists, such as Tolstoi, think it is, and would renounce the use of violence even for defence. But the great majority of Anarchists discriminate between government or crime (two names for the same thing) and defence. To use or threaten violence against any one who had been peaceable is government,—that is, crime; but violence against a criminal, to repress his criminal use of violence, is a different thing. Anarchists commonly regard gross fraud as equivalent to violence in justifying violent reprisal.

Of course the business-like way of using violence, or its threat, to repress violence is by social organization, with the ordinary machinery of police, courts, and jails. Many Anarchists approve of this machinery, desiring only that it be confined to defensive service; and it is obvious that in an Anarchistic society those who wanted such service could not be prevented from combining and maintaining a police establishment, since any use of force to prevent them must, from its users' standpoint, be tyrannically governmental.

Thus the triumph of Anarchism would not prevent the continuance of police and jails, and such continuance is to be expected. But this would not be government, since it would not be able to collect any tax except by threatening to withdraw its services from non-payers, or to enforce any law against those who let others alone. It could not even prevent the establishment of a rival police service in the same place. But government is not government, unless it monopolizes its business within its boundaries.

The question arises whether violence against property is in the same category with violence against persons. Here is the chief split among those who call themselves Anarchists, one party holding that property in the material products of labor is a corollary of personal liberty and should be defended as such, while the other holds that all property is an absurd institution, whose defence is an outrage on personal liberty. Logically, each party holds that the others are not true Anarchists.

Is law-breaking Anarchistic? There are two kinds of law-breakers,—Anarchists and tyrants. An Anarchist is one who is unwilling to be subject to the will of others, and is willing to allow others the same liberty. A tyrant is one who breaks laws himself at will, but wants others kept in subjection; for instance, Napoleon, Rockefeller, or any striking workman who tries to maintain his strike by violence against "scabs." Tyrants should not be called Anarchists, even if the New York "World" does talk about "anarchy directed by a usurping despot."

The public is interested in the relation of Anarchism to violence. While it is clear, from the above discussion, that violence against peaceable people is contrary to the whole doctrine of Anarchism, and that, when such is practised by a professed Anarchist, it shows that he does not know what Anarchism is, it is also clear that there is nothing contrary to Anarchistic principle in the use of violence against those who themselves are using governmental force to repress liberty. But neither is such violence commanded by Anarchistic principle, for no Anarchist holds himself bound to meet force by force, unless he finds some use in it. The defenders of property hold that, where there is any tolerable amount of free speech, it is brutish, useless, and altogether condemnable for a small party to attack the established authority with bloodshed. The Anarchist-Communists grade all the way from this position to the advocacy of the most reckless violence.

The Anarchistic policy of the present is to diffuse our doctrines, live our own lives, and do our own business without regard to the decrees of government as far as possible, and encourage others to do the same. The policy of the future must be determined by the circumstances of the future.

STEPHEN T. BYINGTON.

Not a Single Tax.

I am receiving aid from an unexpected quarter. The editor of "New Christianity," a paper published at Ithaca, N. Y., by a clergyman who stands, economically, on the single tax platform, offers a copy of my pamphlet, "State Socialism and Anarchism," to each of his subscribers who will send him a two-cent stamp with a request for the *brochure*. He is moved to make this offer by his belief—held in spite of his dissent from my views of the land question and the sex question—that, for a small work, this pamphlet is "one of the best eye-openers on the general subject which it treats that have yet been published." Notwithstanding my ingrained conviction that every man should circulate the doctrines that he believes rather than those that he does not believe, I take off my hat in presence of this preacher's liberality. And, before I put it on again, I will say a word in response to a suggestion of his, apropos of free banking. He is not inclined to dispute my claims as to the economic results that would flow from freedom in finance, but he reminds me that, if the *single* tax were to be adopted, then there would be no tax on banking, and the free competition in banking would come. In the first place, I remark that the "if" is of large size. Though Single Taxers were to gain their ends, the tax on land values would not be the only tax levied; for, strange to say, it may be laid down as a rule (to which there are a few exceptions) that nobody is more opposed to the singularity of the single tax than is the Single Taxer. A large majority of the Single Taxers believe in a multiplicity of taxes. Henry George himself was a shining example of this curious inconsistency. I am told that he believed in taxing dogs, and it is a well-known fact that he was stoutly opposed to abolition of the tax on banking. Again, even if Single Taxers could be depended upon to abolish all taxes save one, it would still remain to abolish the laws directly prohibiting free banking; for, where these laws exist, there can be no free competition in finance, and the single tax doctrine does not involve their repeal. And, finally, though free banking could be absolutely secured by conceding the single tax, the Anarchists would give no countenance to such a dicker. The Anarchists have no liberties for sale. They have no intention of parting with or relinquishing their claim to any liberties whatsoever in order to keep the liberties they have or to secure others. They will not buy the liberty to issue notes by selling the liberty to use unoccupied land free of rent and free of taxes. They will not consent to the strengthening of tyranny at one point in order to weaken it at another. They want *all* their liberties, and they mean to get them, one by one, as rapidly as possible. And, if the editor of "New Christianity" were to gain for the Anarchists all their liberties save one, and were then to attempt to deny them that one, they would speedily forget his past liberality, and would strike him down without compunction. Not a

single tax, not a single tyrant,—that is Anarchism's ultimatum. T.

Shaw, Wagner, and Siegfried.

In "The Perfect Wagnerite" G. Bernard Shaw offers to the Philistines and perplexed critics an expert's commentary on Wagner's Ring of the Niblungs. He rightly points out in the preface that no intelligent interpretation of that titanic work is possible "without a stock of ideas common to master and disciple," and, since the ideas of the storm and stress period which Wagner shared are taught neither by the education or by the experience of English and American gentlemen-amateurs, "who are almost always political mugwumps and hardly ever associate with revolutionists," our friend Shaw obligingly imparts that knowledge which is most likely to be lacking in the conventional music-lover's equipment. Shaw is both a musician and a revolutionist, and he deals with the philosophy as well as the music of the Ring.

In this article the philosophical side of the matter alone concerns me. Shaw reads Fabian Socialism into the Ring, while frankly admitting that his interpretation is radically divergent from Wagner's own. That Wagner put a great deal of "reform" and revolutionary Socialism, and even Bakounine Anarchism, into the work, only the ignoramuses venture to dispute. But to pretend that there is a self-consistent, reasoned-out, and mature philosophy in the Ring would be an absurdity, and Shaw is not guilty of it. He is content to indicate what meaning a reformer with a definite set of conceptions *can* attach to the Ring; he does not—because he knows better—insist that Wagner intended that meaning. In fact, he tells us bluntly, perfect Wagnerite that he is, that the master has as many interpretations of his work as he had moods and stages of development.

Thus understood, Shaw's explanation need arouse no hostility. So far as Shaw is compelled by his theory to throw overboard the fourth music-drama of the tetralogy, "The Dusk of the Gods," and indeed to condemn it as sensational, melodramatic, insincere, cheap, and anti-Wagnerian, historical evidence alone can determine the correctness of his claim that Wagner realized the atrocity of his offence and deliberately wrote grand opera,—wilfully disregarded his cherished artistic convictions. There is good reason for doubting this charge, though the inferiority and artificiality of the plot of "The Dusk of the Gods" are notorious and flagrant. About the music of this work Shaw is wrong and extravagant. *Given* the theatrical and complicated story, and the music is as characteristic, as appropriate, as marvellous and "inevitable," as any of the tetralogy; but there was no necessity for the story. From Wagner's own nebulous and shifty point of view, the translation of Brünnhilde into a jealous, vengeful, and perfidious "heroine" was entirely gratuitous. Wagner could not allow Siegfried and Brünnhilde to "live happily forever afterward;" but could he not have gotten rid of them in a more logical and natural way?

But I must proceed to my real task. Wotan, the god of gods, according to Shaw, finds that resort to law and convention costs him half his integrity, and he begins to long secretly for some higher power than himself which might destroy the artificial empire of law and establish a true and free republic. Siegfried is this higher power. Siegfried is the neo-Protestant, the thorough representative of the modern spirit. Shaw says:

"Nowadays the supernatural element in Protestantism has perished; and, if every man's private judgment is still to be justified as the most trustworthy interpreter of the will of humanity (which is not a more extreme proposition than the old one about the will of God), Protestantism must take a fresh step in advance and become Anarchism. Which it has accordingly done, Anarchism being one of the notable new creeds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."

Hence the conception "of a perfectly naïve hero upsetting religion, law, and order in all directions, and establishing in their place the unfettered action of humanity doing exactly what it likes, and producing order instead of confusion thereby, because it likes to do what is necessary for the good of the race," was perfectly inevitable for the nineteenth century, according to Shaw; and that conception we find embodied in Siegfried.

But Shaw does not sympathize with this conception. Siegfried is not *his* hero; he personifies one of the movements of this iconoclastic age, but not the one Shaw is identified with. The masterpiece giving artistic expression to Fabian Socialism as qualified by Shaw has not yet appeared. Shaw deems it necessary to address "a word of warning to those who may find themselves attracted by Siegfried's Anarchism or his neo-Protestantism." Anarchism is no panacea; it is hopeless as such, absurd, and impossible. Why? Shaw gives two reasons.

In the first place, experience finds a weak spot in the Anarchist theory in its reliance on the progress of "Man." There is, says Shaw, no such thing as Man in the world; there is a multitude of men, some of them great rascals, some of them statesmen, others both, "with a vast majority *capable of managing their own personal affairs, but not of comprehending social organization* or grappling with the problems created by their association in enormous numbers." If Man means this majority, then Man has made no progress; he has, on the contrary, resisted it. "Such people, like Wagner's giants, *must be* governed by laws; and their assent to such government must be secured by *deliberately* filling them with prejudices and practising on their imaginations by pageantry and artificial eminences." (The italics are all mine).

How, then, is the emancipation of the multitude to come about? Shaw advances a brand-new solution. No serious progress will be made, he declares, until we address ourselves earnestly and scientifically to the task of producing trustworthy human material for society. In short, it is necessary to breed a race of men in whom the life-giving impulses predominate, before the new Protestantism becomes politically practicable. Is this the last word of Shaw Fabianism? Has this intellect labored all these years to bring forth this lame, antiquated, and unscientific conclusion? A Darwinian and evolutionist preaching at this late day State regulation of marriage and reproduction with the view of producing a free race of men! Wotan may have welcomed the displacement of the gods by mortals, but does the State seek and welcome its own destruction? Are the men composing it themselves free from political superstition and desirous of multiplying the number of free men? And, assuming that this freedom and desire exist in these, do they know *how* to breed the emancipated class? Does science teach us how to produce intellectual and moral giants and Siegfrieds? To ask these questions is to answer them. Verily, Shaw is even more grotesque and fantastic with his panacea than Wagner with his. No quackery is more of an affront to intelligence than that of State control of reproduction and education. Shaw's previous notion of elevating the stage by having a State theatre for the production of Ibsen, Maeterlinck, and d'Annunzio was sanity itself in comparison with this marvellous rediscovery.

Besides, it is pure fiction for Shaw to allege that the Anarchistic theory places reliance on Man. The Anarchists are as wise as Shaw, and agree with him that "we must be content to proceed by reactions, hoping that each will establish some permanently practical and beneficial reform or moral habit that will survive the correction of its excesses by the next reaction." They agree with him that the progress that counts is that of the whole mass, and that the process is necessarily slow and tedious. But they are not guilty of the glaring self-contradiction into which his contempt of logic betrays him. He admits that the old Protestantism has, on the whole, justified the direction it took, although the majority of Protestants were not strong and enlightened enough for their creed; but he does not perceive that such an admission is fatal to his theory of artificial breeding. If the old Protestantism succeeded in spite of promiscuous and spontaneous breeding, why cannot the new succeed under the same conditions? A reliance upon Man would not be half as absurd as Shaw's reliance upon "our governors." It is true that social well-being and harmony must and can come only from the breeding of men whose wills and intelligences produce it spontaneously, but that breeding is the natural result of social discipline of sexual affinity and the freedom of mating. Any interference with that freedom would be disastrous, especially interference on the part of "our governors." Imagine the British parliament starting out to destroy convention and the State by experiments in breeding! Where is Shaw's humor?

We come now to Shaw's second objection to Siegfried's Anarchism. It is familiar to us, but it will bear restatement. To quote:

"As to the industrial or political machinery of society, Anarchism there must always reduce itself speedily to absurdity. Even the modified form of Anarchy on which modern civilization is based—that is, the abandonment of industry, in the name of individual liberty, to the upshot of competition for personal gain between private capitalists—is a disastrous failure, and is, by the mere necessities of the case, giving way to ordered Socialism. . . . . Liberty is an excellent thing, but it cannot begin until society has paid its daily debt to nature by first earning its living. There is no liberty before that, except the liberty to live at

somebody else's expense."

This is not the place to challenge the assumption that political and industrial liberty are impossible because incompatible with equitable distribution of products, or the statement that the present economic system is an exemplification of Anarchism. I merely wish to point out two things: first, how much reliance Shaw again places on "our governors," whom he wishes to entrust with perfect control of the industrial and political machinery of society; second, what a hollow mockery his neo-Protestantism would be, and how little it would add to the amount of liberty we already enjoy. If the State is to deny political and economic liberty and to regulate marriage and education, what, beyond the liberty to think, will the "free race of men" have that will not be subject to control? In what way will that race be "free"—freer than the present race? And of what possible advantage is freedom of thought and speech, if action is never to be free? If nature dictates political and economic despotism, the slavery of the many, why breed a new race of men? The real trouble is, according to Shaw, that we have too much freedom, that our governors do not govern enough. What we need, then, is not Siegfrieds, but bolder and more tyrannical Wotans to take more complete charge of the political and economic machinery and to make the marriage laws even more rigid than Fricka would have them. But what an appalling faith in the omniscience and benevolence of "our governors" all this argues!

Another self-contradiction may be noted. Shaw says that the majority can manage their own affairs, but not the affairs of society, and that therefore "our governors" (many of whom are rascals, remember) have to attend to that at the expense of liberty. How is this to be reconciled with the other statement that it is possible to breed a race of men "whose wills and intelligences may be depended on to produce spontaneously" social well-being? What does "produce spontaneously" mean here, if not harmony out of competition and political and economic freedom, the doing away with regulation and "*ordered* Socialism?" If social well-being can be produced spontaneously, what need of "our governors" is there in the political and economic machinery?

The only answer possible to Shaw is that his free race of men will spontaneously choose ordered Socialism, abandon economic and political liberty as a dream barred out by nature, and cheerfully and deliberately place themselves under the management of governors and rulers. The Siegfrieds will elect political and economic Wotans, and be happy and "free" in their slavery. But, again I ask, how much more freedom will they enjoy than we possess to-day?

Into what swamps, quagmires, and pitfalls does Shaw's Fabian Socialism and Calvinist economics lead him! V. Y.

Van Cott in the Role of Censor.

It having transpired, in a recent investigation of a murder mystery, that private letter-box agencies are used for criminal purposes, the postmaster of New York has taken it upon himself to withhold all mail addressed to such agencies, basing his action upon a post-office regulation which directs him to deliver mail matter only after having satisfactorily identified the addressee. This is an obvious abuse of a wise regulation. The postmaster has transformed a rule intended to assure *proper delivery* of mail matter into a rule preventing the delivery of any but *proper mail matter*. He has made himself a censor as well as a carrier, and the interest that he takes in his censorship necessarily detracts from his efficiency as a carrier. Besides, even were we to assume that the postmaster's motive is the same as that of the regulation in question,—namely, accurate delivery instead of meddlesome despotism,—there is nothing in the regulation, even from that point of view, to warrant his recent action. When mail matter is addressed to A in care of B, the accurate delivery aimed at by the regulation is to be secured by identification, not of A, but of B. The sender of the matter, by addressing in care of B, signifies his willingness and intention to entrust to B the delivery of the matter to A. Therefore the postmaster's duty ends with the identification of B and the delivery to B of the matter in question. So far as the postmaster is concerned, B is the addressee. The identity of A is none of the postmaster's business. Now, in the case of these letter-box agencies B is always the proprietor of the agency; and A, the receiver of mail, by renting the box, and C, the sender of mail, by addressing to the box number at the office of the letter-box agency, unite in trusting B as their medium of communication. Consequently the postmaster, who knows B, has done his entire duty to A, to C, and to the government, when he has delivered to B the matter addressed by C to A in B's care. But such is not the view of the officious postmaster of New York, Mr. Cornelius Van Cott. He wants to know who A is, what his business is, what his real name is, why he presumes to receive letters and to arrange for their receipt without Van Cott's sanction, and whether he comes up to the Van Cott standard of morality. And so he notifies A that his mail is "held up" at the general post-office, and that no more mail matter addressed to him will be delivered at the letter-box agency until he, A, shall visit Van Cott and render a satisfactory account of his life, manners, motives, and morals. As a result of which thousands of people are deprived of their right of private correspondence under conditions that suit themselves and interfere with no one, and hundreds of petty shop-keepers who have managed to maintain their solvency by the legitimate business of renting letter-boxes are seriously injured and perhaps thrown into the street. And the hypocrisy of the whole proceeding is shown by the partiality with which it is carried out. The regulation is enforced only against the weak, not against the powerful. Nearly every daily newspaper is a private letter-box agency, and any one, by paying the cost of a two-line advertisement giving an assumed address, can make the publisher of the newspaper his medium for the receipt of letters, sent through the mails or otherwise, for a period of ten days. As much crime and vice is carried on through these newspaper letter-boxes as through any others. Yet Van Cott does not lift his finger to interfere with these. Why? Because, hypocrite and coward that he is, he knows that the newspapers are powerful and would drive him out of office. On the other hand, by suppressing their rivals in this line of business, he curries favor with the newspapers, and they encourage him in his course. Only one of them, the New York "Times," has had the honesty and the courage to so much as hint that he is going beyond his province. And, while he is thus engaged in suppressing immorality in certain quarters and protecting it in others, he sends to Arizona mail matter plainly addressed to me at my post office box in New York, and it comes back to New York and into my hands three weeks after it is due, provided I am fortunate enough to get it at all. T.

The Critics on Oscar Wilde's Poem.

Since many readers of Liberty will be interested in the attitude of the press toward "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," a number of extracts from the press notices are reproduced below:

Albany Press: "It is strong writing, almost too strong; it is horrible, gruesome, uncanny, and yet most fascinating and highly ethical . . . It is one of the greatest poems of the century, a permanent addition to English literature. It may be read in a few moments, but the impression left by that reading will abide in every sensitive mind for many years. It is the best Lenten and Easter sermon of the year. There is no escape from its impressive lessons, and hard indeed must be the nature that will not be affected and improved thereby."

Indianapolis Journal: "Notwithstanding his moral obliquity, Wilde's intellectual and literary ability has never been questioned. . . . Into the verse he puts all the shame and horror and suffering that a man may feel in his position. The ballad is the concentrated bitterness of humiliation, the despairing cry of the hopeless. . . . Literary faults can be found in the verses; some lines do not run quite smoothly; but, as a whole, the work is one of singular power, holding the reader fascinated to the last line. Nothing approaching it in strength has been produced in recent years."

Horace L. Traubel, in the Conservator: "We have needed an American edition of Wilde's great poem, and a publisher equal to the task has been found. People who despise or hate Wilde should read this poem. People who imagine themselves superior to the prisoners in jails should read this poem. People who love invasive laws should read this poem. People who think existing governmental methods of meeting social invasion civilized should read this poem. People who do not know that laws may make as well as punish crime should read this poem. In fact, everybody should read this poem. For somewhere it touches everybody—accuses everybody, excuses everybody, appeals to everybody. It is a poem wrung from the heart. It is a poem generated of agony—nor yet so much agony for self as agony in the presence of the agony of others. It pours you full of its own sympathy—it outniagaras Niagara in the boundless flood of its forgiveness. When this poem is understood, when the background of this poem is penetrated, jails will be revised or be no more, criminals will be loved and persuaded, the veiled and mailed hands of institutions will be withdrawn. A thousand poets write poems, and all the poems die. A thousand readers read the thousand poems, and wonder why men sing upon what would seem impulses so trivial. But here is a poem torn, dragged, from one bleeding heart, destined to reawaken in men a large respect for man—a poem bloodred with transfiguring democracy—a poem making vocal at last and adequately a tragic overshadowing wrong."

New York Evening Sun: "It is strong in parts and very weak in parts. But those who love the queer in literature will make a place for it on their bookshelves beside 'The Decay of Lying.' It is a pathetic example of genius gone to the dogs."

Baltimore Herald: "The lines furnish convincing evidence of Wilde's intellectual force, but the unsavory episode recalled by the poem as a whole obtrudes itself unpleasantly in the perusal."

Brooklyn Citizen: "Many of the stanzas are cries out of the lowest hell. The poem indeed takes rank with the most extraordinary psychological phenomena of this or any time. That one capable of being imbued with its sentiments should have permitted himself to descend into hadean depths is a striking confirmation of the truth, so often sneered at as a diction of the preacher, that the heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, and of the fact that in each are the potentialities of dual lives—the angel and the satyr lying side by side in every bosom. . . . Of the poem's superior merit we hardly think there can be a doubt. Indeed, it may well be questioned whether anything equalling it in originality of strain and vividness—we had almost said luridness—of coloring has been produced in recent days. There is a recurrent note that reminds us of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' and in not a few stanzas are excellences not unworthy of Coleridge."

Chicago Record: "The poem is a mixture of weakness and strength. Here and there a bad line throws down an otherwise excellent stanza; as, referring to the drop of the gallows-trap:

> But it is not sweet with nimble feet
> To dance upon the air.

. . . . . Bound very unbecomingly in blue and white. As a poem, no one will question that it has merit."

Philadelphia Call: "The poem is attractive from its very repulsiveness, and, though its authorship is shrouded in mystery, the diction is not a little suggestive. . . . Though it raises no protest directly against the justice of imprisonment, it creates a feeling of commiseration for the imprisoned, and impresses the fact of 'man's inhumanity to man' in every line."

Cleveland Plain Dealer: "It is, far and away, the best thing Oscar Wilde has ever done, and it is difficult to conceive that the dudish affectations of the poet of the sunflower and velvet breeches period have changed to the writing of such lines as these, in which realism has been carried to the point of hideousness in some places, but the strength of which cannot be denied even by those who may feel shocked and repelled by it. . . . It is a gruesome story grimly told, but it is one the reader will remember."

Syracuse Post-Standard: "A morbid interest attaches to 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol.' It is not necessary to remind the public of the name and deeds of the criminal who wrote the book, but the verses, commemorating the hanging of a murderer in the prison, bite into the reader's mind. They are both savage and pathetic."

George E. Macdonald, in the Truth Seeker: "I have invested a dime in 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol,' published by Benj. R. Tucker, the distinguished Tuckerite. Unfortunately the author, whose jail mark was 'C. 3. 3.', met with certain misadventures which rendered the use of his name no longer permissible. The ballad is undoubtedly the most remarkable piece of verse written in this decade. It is not so great as Byron's 'Prisoner of Chillon,' nor as gruesome on the whole as Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner,' but it approaches those masterpieces."

New Bedford Standard: "We are not quite sure whether the narration is absolutely sincere. Sometimes it seems so; and sometimes the emotion seems strained and artificial. . . . The picture of the condemned man as he watches the white cloud which is the only sign of a living outside world that he will not see again is wonderfully suggestive; but it has a little the air of experimentation in the arrangement of words to find, a few pages further along, the same verse varied only by a slight change, and still further on to discover it again with another slight change. . . . . . . There begins to be a doubt whether the poet actually felt what he was writing or whether he was only trying his skill in the construction of effective word-groupings. A good many such conjectures can be made, when different parts of this poem are contrasted. Possibly the work is typical of all life—a compound of genuine sincerity with insincerity, sometimes recognized, sometimes unknown even to its author. However, there is no doubt that it is a striking work. There are scores of attention-compelling verses. . . . . There are some rather bitter thrusts at the theory of the punishment of crime by imprisonment, mingled with piteous appeals to the heart and conscience of those who have been so fortunate as to escape the cell. However we may suspect that the poet is merely acting a part in which he is more solicitous for the artistic effect than he is for the moral influence, it must be admitted that the poem is a notable one, calculated to make a deep impression upon the reader. Not many handsomer specimens of bookmaking are seen than this. The printing is perfection in every respect, evidencing the accurate taste of the publisher."

New York Tribune: "It is doubtless the fear of being considered prudish and provincial which has caused some individuals to take seriously 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol.' No one pretends to sympathize with the notorious author who is understood to have enlivened his confinement by the composition of these verses; but, of course, say the wiseacres, we must not allow our judgment of the work to be warped by prejudice against the man. Well, it needs no great detachment from personal considerations to decide as to the merit of this ballad. Candidly, it has no merit. The tone is the familiar tone of the criminal who, in an abyss of self-pity, finds the hands of justice intolerably cruel. The author has not, either, lent any weight to his work by echoing weakly the manner of Hood's 'Dream of Eugene Aram.' This is, in short, a performance marked by cheap platitude and mawkish sentiment. The crocodile tears which the author sheds over the murderer whose hanging is dwelt upon at such length only provoke contempt."

Chicago Evening Post: "No volume of recent verse has attracted more marked attention or run through more editions—Mr. Kipling's lively verses always excepted—than Oscar Wilde's 'Ballad of Reading Gaol.' After passing to its tenth or eleventh English edition, it is brought out in a good binding and beautifully printed on the finest paper in the first American edition, the format being more convenient than that of the other for any imaginable purpose. Reading it for the fourth or fifth time after a lapse of several months, it is found to gain in strength—a sure test of its enduring qualities. It proves what the world has been slowly seeking to convince itself of—that the punishment meted out to criminals is far more likely to result in hopelessness and despair than any permanent reformation. There has never been a more convincing argument brought against capital punishment, and nothing that has disclosed to the world outside the thought of the criminals within the walls of a prison. Apart from all that, the poem is a finished work of art, producing its effects by the simplest means, the experiences of the poet giving him that collective intelligence in the matter which enables it to rival in single-heartedness and direction other works in the same form."

Milwaukee Sentinel: "'The Ballad of Reading Gaol,' by an unknown quantity designated as 'C. 3. 3.', is rhymed with a certain deftness, and goes with a taking swing, but its theme—that of a murderer who very properly, if unpleasantly, paid the penalty on the gallows—is an instance of that sentimentality over criminals which is much to be deplored."

New York Town Topics: "If virtue be the mother of necessity, then verily must time be father of all the mercies. A year heals many wounds and smooths a score of frowns. A year ago, when first 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' appeared, the name of its author was but whispered furtively, and even the London publisher, Mr. Smithers, paraded the mystery more than the man. The volume, in sombre dun, contained no clue, save what was in the public's mind. Now, a year later, a New York publisher reprints the poem, and inserts a loose sheet in the book which bears these words above his signature: 'The price of this book is $1. The nom de plume (C. 3. 3.) employed by the author (Oscar Wilde) was his prison number during his term of imprisonment in Reading Jail.' And in those few lines one has, I think, the first publicly acknowledged sponsorship to any literature from this pen since first public disgrace fell upon its owner. Persons with a mind for mathematics may hereby calculate the life of a modern odium. It is to be considered, of course, that, in the case of this present local publication of the 'Ballad of Reading Gaol,' the publisher could not well have committed both the crimes of piracy and silence. Having summoned up courage to brave the American people with a borrowed version of a fine poem, the least he could do was to give its writer his due. And as this is more than the legitimate publisher of the work in London has yet had the hardihood to do, one may aver that this is a case where a pirate may, for once, be thanked for a small favor. Of the ballad itself it is, of course, far too late to speak. All who follow close to the van of the modern movement in letters have long ago found its beauties and its crudities. It remains a fine, an awful, tragic fragment. It is, to use a hackneyed, sodden phrase, a human document; and the virtue of its poetry goes far—in tune with the Madonna verses of Verlaine—to intensify the mystery of that cryptic marriage of spirit and flesh that makes the being we call man. It is one of those ballads of to-day, one of those strong voices of the time, not unfit to rank with Mr. Kipling's 'Vampire' or Charles Edwin Markham's 'The Man with the Hoe'—that no man may easily forget nor easily refrain from being haunted by. How many are the verses of recent years that are not utterly dead by now? But, like the poems just mentioned and certain stanzas in John Davidson's 'Ballad of a Nun,' there are lines in this ballad of Wilde's that are written in ink of a very lasting sort."

Philadelphia Inquirer: "It is surprising that there should be any demand for what Wilde may write."

St. Paul Pioneer-Press: "It would be difficult to do justice to the merits of the poem without a knowledge of its authorship, since one must remember the quality of the earlier verse of Oscar Wilde in order to realize what a path he must have trod before he could achieve the awful sincerity of this ballad. From first to last it is an intense, terrible acknowledgment of the final implacability of life."

Boston Congregationalist: "Neither subject nor verse is felicitous."

Pittsburg Leader: "The local reviews of Oscar Wilde's remarkable poem have been decidedly amusing, and, since no printed notices accompanied the book, they must have been original. Either the reviewers did not read the poem and are influenced by a prejudice against the personality of the author, or they are unacquainted with the growing rarity of the ballad as a form of poetic expression, and have not considered how perfectly this one fulfils all the requirements of that form. . . . . Though one habitually associates literary affectations with Mr. Wilde's productions, and though some degree of affectation is almost unavoidable in reviving an almost obsolete literary form, yet one is forced to admit that in this ballad there is no effect of posing. It is the richest contribution to ballad literature that has recently been made. It is genuinely a ballad; no other form would have fitted it. Its sincerity is its *raison d'être*. . . . . Whatever the poem may lack, a fearful genuineness it has. In the naked simplicity of its gruesome details, in the effortless bald relation of frightful sensations, in the haunting shiver of horror that runs through it from the first line to the last, it recalls the ballade epitaph by François Villon, written for himself and his companions about to be hanged. It has in full measure that potent 'experiental' quality, also characteristic of Villon, of whom M. Brunetière says: 'The great superiority of his work is due to his having lived his poetry.' That he did 'live' it is, of course, no recommendation of Master Villon personally, but in the abstract the critic counts no human cost too great when it produces a genuine literary result. . . . . It is certainly the best poetry that Wilde has ever written. He was a wonderfully brilliant dramatist, the only fault of his artfully-constructed plays being that they had nothing very important to say and lacked weight. He was, when he chose to be, a prose writer of very considerable elegance, but of his potential possibilities as a poet it is difficult to speak seriously, because he never took them very seriously himself. If he ever had the anointed spear, he generally used it as a harlequin's wand. He preferred the petty and easy conquests in letters; yet he was usually better than he tried to be. He never did a really cheap thing. Something of the grace of the fallen angel always clung about him. The Orientals sometimes make rings in the form of a serpent, with a jewel in the head, and about such rings they have a story. When Satan fell from heaven and became a serpent, every mark of his holiness and high estate was lost save

Continued on page 8.

Changed Rhymes for a Changed People.

Wave the flag and shout for glory;
Save the savages with bullets.
Tracts are out of date; so give them
Facts in shape of shell and scrapnel.

Carve an empire; send out squadrons;
Starve your poor at home to do so:
Preach of Christ; then, like Mohammed,
Reach the heathen heart with iron.

Unarmed, your naked coasts unguarded.
Unharmed you stood—exemplar to the world;
Your flag of peace the hope of war-worn Europe,
Your rag of war is now the world's despair.

James J. Dooling.

A Plumb-Liner.

[Chicago Chronicle.]

"Every government is an absolute despotism. Coercion is the basis of all human governments,—aggression of the one or the many upon the rights of the individual. This is wrong. No man and no set of men have any right to limit the actions of any other man or set of men. The only just limit is the proximity of some other individual to the one who performs a certain act. Laws made by legislatures are mere expressions of opinion by the members thereof, and should have no binding effect on him who does not hold to those opinions. Therefore I am opposed to the enforcement of any 'hand-made' law. I am an Anarchist."

The foregoing paragraph is an epitome of the political belief of Austin W. Wright, of 3637 Prairie avenue, Chicago. Mr. Wright is a provision broker, who operates on the board of trade during trading hours and delves deep into abstract philosophy in his leisure moments. He declares bluntly and with evident conviction that he is a citizen of Illinois only because he is forced to be. He says that under existing conditions the only way he can withdraw is by emigration or suicide. Not caring to do either, he is by force compelled,—regretfully, he says—to participate to a limited extent in the forcible retention of others in the State.

Mr. Wright is an anomaly among men. His doctrines, if carried out, would mean the total revolution, if not destruction, of society as it exists to day. He admits this himself, but says there is no reason in the nature of human life under which he should be forced to pay taxes, support public officers or offices, vote, or in any other way participate in the affairs of the State or municipality, unless he himself voluntarily so participates. He believes he should have the power as well as right to say: "I do not approve of your State idea; I do not believe in your so-called laws, and am opposed to their enforcement. I have no objection to your enforcing them against yourselves, if you want to, but think they should not be applied to me against my will. I therefore withdraw from your association, and will paddle my own canoe without your assistance or protection."

The pronunciation of this platform in a court of law brought the broker into sudden prominence some ten days ago. He says that his friends have known it for years, but the public was not aware that a reputable citizen was in the city who is an avowed Anarchist. He is not a dangerous man, for he does not preach Anarchy; neither does he advocate any of those severe measures generally attributed by the public to so-called Anarchists. In fact, he is diametrically opposed to any of the movements fostered by "groups" such as those charged with the Haymarket troubles. He deprecates the use of force to accomplish anything.

It was in Judge Burke's court that Mr. Wright broke into prominence and publicity. He was called with a panel of jurymen for service in that tribunal. He was examined to determine his qualification for such service, and, to the surprise of the judge, announced that he did not believe in law. He was asked if he had any reason to urge why he should not serve as a juror, and replied that he had. He did not believe in the laws made by men, or in the enforcement thereof. He would not swear to enforce any enactment or decree.

Judge Burke conducted the examination, and then directed Mr. Wright to stand to the left. This was done, and the court proceeded with the examination of the rest of the panel. Mr. Wright deprecates the statements concerning the incident which have gained publicity, for, he says, there was no discourtesy or sullenness on either side, the whole matter being disposed of with due respect on his part to the court and with a similar manner toward him by the court. He relates the incident thus:

"I was drawn with some forty or fifty others to serve as a juror, and was present in Judge Burke's court. I had never met him before, nor had I ever seen him. When it was my time to be examined, he asked me if I had any reason why I should be excused from jury service. I replied that I was an Anarchist; did not believe in his laws or their enforcement. He questioned me a little more to get a direct statement of my position, and then said: 'You may stand to the left.'

"I did so, and said to myself softly, as I took up a position in the background: 'I'm a goat.' You remember the story? If I believed in the foolish superstitions of the religious people, I would believe that some day 'over there' will be two divisions, the sheep and the goats. The goats will stand to the left. Well, I was sent to the left, and it made me think I was looked upon in the high court as a goat; hence my internal comment.

"I stood there for a while, until, in fact, all the rest of the panel had been examined and it seemed to me that I had been forgotten. Then I approached the bench again, and asked Judge Burke: 'Is there any reason, your honor, why I should be longer detained here?' The judge turned to me and said: 'Oh, yes, you are the man who would decline to enforce the laws?' I answered yes, and he then said: 'None in the world; you may go.' That was all that was said. His manner was dignified and courteous. He never asked me about my attitude toward him, so that question did not arise. If he had, I should have said that I had great respect for him personally, but profound contempt for his office."

Mr. Wright is a type in himself. He would be, even without the radical opinions he announces. He is short, little more than five feet in stature, sturdily built, with a well-shaped head, firm jaw, and decided manner. He is cool, nervy, and imperturbable. His eye has a pleasant twinkle, and his manner is cordial without effusiveness. He is dignified, speaks plainly, and is absolutely indifferent to criticism. He evidently has the elements of business success, even if it were not known that he has won success. He is kindly by nature, but prefers to do his own will to being trammeled by any kind of tie not voluntarily assumed.

Mr. Wright is something over fifty years of age. He has lived in this city over half of his life. He is a native American, and until recent years bore his part in the political work of the party with which he affiliated. He began his career in Chicago in the hog market, weighing and buying for a big packing concern. He was a man of sound judgment in this work, and was a trusted employee. Later in life he became interested in the provision market, and made several trades before plunging into the pit. He won, and soon gave up his office to join the board of trade.

In a few years he became known as a shrewd and daring trader. He made money rapidly, until he was reputed to be worth close to $1,000,000. He lost heavily in the Cudahy corner, but still has enough on which to live in comfort. He does not care for great wealth now, and is content to trade along and add to his income so that he may enjoy anything he wants. Since the collapse of the pork corner he has devoted much time to the study of philosophy and less to trading, although he appears daily in the provision pit.

His failure was not the cause of his adopting Anarchistic principles. He asserts that he had commenced to think along these lines before he became a very busy man. Then during the time of his greatest prosperity he was too busy to read much, and, although his "mental development" was progressing, he gave it but little food from the works of philosophers. He was too much engaged in trading to read books. Since the collapse, however, he has been a constant reader, and has become confirmed in the principles that over fifteen years ago began to appeal to him.

"When did I become an Anarchist?" asked Mr. Wright. "Oh, I don't know just when. You see, it was a process of gradual mental development. I began by being a Democrat. Then I began reading Herbert Spencer, and in the course of time I found that I must be an Anarchist. There was a time, when I was what you call well-to-do, when I was too busy to give much time to philosophy, although I did not entirely abandon reading. A man in that condition is too busy to do much more than care for his property. Part of the time I had more money than I knew what to do with, and all the time I was very busy trading; so, you see, I merely progressed because the thought, once started, is bound to continue.

"In the last ten years I have read more than in all my life before. I have been an Anarchist for quite a while. I make no secret of my belief; indeed, I have read papers on some branches of the question to various societies. All my friends and neighbors know it, and I have no objection to the world knowing it. I maintain that that people which is least governed is the best governed. I don't believe in laws made by man. There is only one kind of law, and that is the law of nature. All others are mere expressions of belief. Why they should bind me unless I accept them I cannot conceive.

"Natural laws are facts. They exist because they are facts which must remain until disturbed by some powerful agency. The control of the elements is a natural law, and cannot be amended by any act of any legislature, no matter how learnedly the body might reason. No man can define a fact; so hand made laws are not facts, but expressions of opinion. Opinions should not govern any man who does not hold to them. Otherwise he is being coerced into something which he denies or disapproves of. This coercion applies to every law made by a human being.

"I believe that every man has the natural right to do just as he pleases, without let or hindrance from any other man or set of men, so long as he does not commit any aggression on the like liberty of his fellows. But all governments, whether autocracies or majority rule, are aggressions on the rights of the individual. The ruler forces his opinions on the ruled. If it is a case of majority, then the majority forces the minority to live as it dictates, regardless of the fact that the minority does not feel that way or believe in the so called laws. That is all wrong.

"No man is obliged to buy stock in a joint-stock company or corporation. If he does not wish to engage in the business of that corporation, he lets it alone. He does not interfere with it, but neither does he pay in any money to support it. He says: 'Go ahead, but I don't want any of your stock, and will not pay anything to your support. Now, why should he be compelled to support a State when it does a line of business he does not believe in or sympathize with? Why should he give up his money in taxes to support the opinions of a majority whose principles are diametrically opposed to his? But that is what is being done in all governments.

"Coercion is the basis of all governments. I do not believe in a single law or decree of legislature or court in Illinois. Then I have the natural right, which no man should have right or power to take from me, to withdraw from the State. Can I do this? No. I am forced to participate in the aggression against my rights and those of others. There are but one or two ways open to me or him who holds with me. I must either emigrate or commit suicide. If I stay here, I must help support a State I do not wish to belong to.

"I ought to have the power to say: 'I hold different opinions concerning the functions of government. Your laws do not express my opinions; therefore I will not remain a member of your association. I will paddle my own canoe.' Having said this, I should be exempt from all the obligations of citizenship in that State. But am I? Not at all, for, if I don't pay taxes, 'law officers' will seize my property, and thus make me take part.

"Every man should have the right to withdraw from State or municipal associations if he wants to. I do not believe that in the nature of things he would succeed. But he should have the right to try, in case he is dissatisfied with things. In a short time he would come back, and say he wanted to get back in, and would bear his share. But, you see, the central idea of Anarchy is that he would do voluntarily what under government he is compelled to do whether he wants to or not. That is Anarchy in a nutshell.

"Tolstoi? No, I do not hold with him or his followers. Neither do I believe in the doctrines enunci-

ated by Parsons, Spies, and the rest of the so-called Anarchists. They were not Anarchists. I believe they were actuated by noble motives, but they were for State Socialism. That is, they wanted the State to control all, even the individual goods and acts of the individuals. That is diametrically opposed to my belief. I believe in the State controlling nothing that is mine or limiting my acts beyond my aggressions against another. Those people believed in centralization and the bringing of this about by forcible means. I oppose the use of force of any kind as applied to a human being.

"Would this mean revolution? Certainly. But it must be a peaceful revolution growing out of the voluntary actions of the members of society and not through the forcible application of the principles. If any force were applied, the foundation of Anarchy would be destroyed. There is a wide-spread sentiment of Anarchy, by the way, among the people of this land. I do not believe there is a person in Illinois who would, if he had the power to do or not to do, enforce every act of the legislature. I would not enforce any. He differs from me then only in degree and not in kind. He is an Anarchist to the extent of the non-enforcement of the laws he does not believe in. Let him follow this train of thought to its logical conclusion, and he will land where I have landed.

"The functions of government should be limited purely to the defensive. Aggressions from outside, and those which grow out of the petty differences in society as organized, should be prevented. Government should defend the members of society against these, and stop there. But does it? The fact is that few men will speak out their beliefs. One man may say that I am right and he indorses me, but that fellow over there and this one here needs watching. So government really means that I am to do as I please and prevent every other fellow from doing what he pleases. I may do anything I think is right and proper, and prevent some one else from doing what I think is unright and improper. That is the science of government as applied to-day.

"I believe in the right of every individual to do whatever he is certain is right and proper, limited only to that proximity of another where the action may become an aggression. The trouble is that people think that government is as great as society. That is not the case by any means. Men say to me that they believe in liberty, the fullest possible under the organization of society, but that liberty is not license. I have asked many of them to define the difference, and have failed to get an answer. They cannot make the distinction to save their lives.

"If we must have government, then I think the best form is an absolute monarchy, an autocracy. In such a case it seems to me that the one man would feel some responsibility for the subjects. The majority has no sense of responsibility. There is no oppression, no cruelty, no meanness the majority will not undertake with absolute cold blood. It will grind the minority down, and revel in the misery it has created. It is an absolutely irresponsible fraction of the body politic. We who live in a land of majority rule know this better than most peoples.

"I have no objection to such a despotism, if I could choose the despot. I know no man on earth is as well fitted for the job as myself. I have no objection to any other man playing the despot so long as he does not apply his despotism to me. If any man can boss me, it argues he has better intellectual and physical perfections,—something which I am entitled to deny. I see no reason why any man or combination of men should decide that I am too weak to look after myself.

"Laws do not protect. If it were not for the fact that the great body of the people is law-abiding—that is, lives up to the standard of nature and discriminates between right and wrong—the opinions of legislatures, it seems to me, would be of little avail. People say that policemen preserve order. That is not true; the general ability to tell right from wrong and the general observance of the right is what protects. It is in the end a voluntary proceeding. If the people did not observe this natural law of letting others alone in the exercise of natural rights, could you find policemen enough in the world to preserve order? Not at all. Chaos would surely follow. Therefore the laws—so-called—of man do not protect. They really rob men of their rights, enable the strong to protect the weak and commit all kinds of crimes under color of law.

"Do I vote? Oh, no. If I did, I would participate in the wrongs committed in the name of government. I formerly voted, but shall do so no more. I voted several years after I saw I must become an Anarchist, because I saw no reason why I should not give my support to things I approved of. Then I saw that by voting I was assenting to and participating in the aggressions of government, and I quit. No, I will take no part in anything which connects me with something with which I wish no part."

The Literature of the Woman Question.*

[From the German of Dr. Rudolf Steiner in the "Magazin für Litteratur."]

The friends of human progress, who, by their temperament, or perhaps also by a certain exceptional power of mind, become champions of radical thought meet essentially two kinds of opponents. The first are those whose feelings cling to the traditional, because they fancy that they see in it the good. They regard reformatory ideas as more or less the result of an intellectual or moral defect. They are the true conservatives. They are joined by a second kind of opponents,—those who are not hostile to reformatory ideas in themselves, but who never tire in emphasizing the "countervailing difficulties in existing conditions" as against all innovation. They regard it as their task to p[illegible]rakes, even when they are by no means hosti[illegible] the radical ideas themselves. For the opponents of the first kind there is but one remedy,—time. Argument will not immediately reach them. They can be enlisted in a new cause only by repeated presentation of the same, their feelings gradually adapting themselves to its force.

Things appear to be somewhat different with those opponents whose feelings are in sympathy with the new, and who are unable to surmount the "certain difficulties." They must, first of all, come to understand *one* thing,—namely, that the bulk of these difficulties lies less in the force of circumstances which man cannot control than in their own preconceived opinions. They can arrive at no pure judgment concerning human progress, because they are continually piling up all sorts of obstacles by their imagination of what appears to be necessary. How many important "live issues" suffer from these fancied difficulties! For instance, could we not be much farther along in the reform of the higher education, if the interested parties did not continually urge all sorts of things concerning the necessity of retaining certain arrangements in the prevailing educational system? And how much of what is here emphasized as a necessity rests purely on imagination!

There is no doubt that among the questions which at the present time suffer most from these brakeman tactics is the so called woman question. When this question is being discussed, one can see how mountains of fancied difficulties are piled up. A clear recognition of the true value attaching to some of the conditions of the present time might remove many a prejudice in the shortest space. One need but look clearly to see how matters really lie.

If the periodical whose first issue is just out shall fulfil its promise, as seems likely from its splendid beginning, it will operate in the conceivably best manner in the sense of clearing up things. The "Dokumente" aim to publish matters relating to the economical condition of woman. "Uninfluenced by partisan movements and partisan points of view, the paper will offer to women independent, expert, true testimony concerning the real conditions of life; it will indicate the course which women must pursue in order to guard their interests; it will formulate the demands which they must make in order to maintain themselves in the struggle for existence, the demands of economical, social, and political equality."

How pressing these demands are is best shown in a bit of statistical information which the publishers cite in their preface. "Of the nine millions of females above ten years of age in Austria, six and one-quarter millions are self-supporting, according to the census of 1890." For every 100 laboring men there are in Austria 79, in Germany 39, in England 26, and in America 15, self-supporting women. Who can deny that, as against these facts, the position of women in society and the State is the merest mockery? Social arrangements are in a healthy state only when they express existing facts. The problems which these actual conditions assign to woman peremptorily demand a reform of her public position.

It is one of the incomprehensible things, so often met in the intellectual life of the present, that even scientific thinkers assume a hostile attitude towards the demands of the women. Think of all that is said about the nature of woman, and the deductions that are derived therefrom against her aspirations! We are constantly told that woman is in no position to participate in public life. One should expect such talk least from scientifically-trained thinkers. What a cry would they raise, if one should object to a physical experiment on the ground that the nature of the co-operating forces made a result impossible. Concerning that which is possible—they would rightly say—experience alone can decide. And only in the same way can a thinker imbued with the modern spirit judge of the woman question. We know nothing whatever concerning a civilization in which women take such part as an entirely free development of their faculties would give them. All we have to do is to inaugurate the possibility of this free development. And whoever thinks in this manner can only assent to the words of Björnsterne Björnson, contained in a letter to Miss Fickert and published in No. 1 of the "Dokumente:" "The woman question is born of hard necessity; its ideals contain new hope for mankind. We are in the presence of problems—as will gradually be seen—which cannot be solved except in the spirit which is pre-eminently the spirit of woman. We are waiting that through her it may become the ruling spirit in our public discussions. But let her then also prepare herself for her task! By developing her faculties as well as her character."

An article by the Austrian jurist, Anton Menger, on "The New Civil Procedure and Woman," shows what slight regard present-day legislation pays to actual conditions; and a description of the social condition of the primary teachers gives an idea of the economical struggles which women must meet who enter industrial life.

Only when she has complete liberty in the development of her faculties can woman furnish the contribution to human civilization which is possible to her nature. For this reason that school of thought will be most just to the cause of woman which aims to give to human development the direction of the greatest liberty. Individualistic Anarchism seeks to realize the greatest liberty. It is only those who know nothing whatever of the aims and the spirit of this school who can connect it with the Anarchism which sees in the "propaganda by deed" a means for the realization of liberty. One needs but to say in clear words what individualistic Anarchism wants, and it is at once seen that it must be the greatest enemy of all propaganda by deed. In No. 39 of the last volume of this magazine John Henry Mackay and myself have shown what are the differences between Anarchism and propaganda by deed.

Every man who thinks in the spirit of modern science—*and thinks consistently*—arrives at individualistic Anarchism. Modern science reveals to us the evolution of man out of lower organisms in a purely natural process. This evolution is not yet closed. It must continue. As in the lower organisms lay the forces which led them up to man, so the latter contains the forces for yet further development. Everything undertaken to fit man into a preordained order interferes with his onward development. Whoever establishes a political or social order does so only on the basis of past evolution. But, when one establishes a certain fixed order of human society on the basis of past evolution, he cripples what is to come by what has gone before. It is impossible to know what germs of future development still lie hidden in man. We cannot therefore determine an order in which man shall develop himself. He must have complete liberty to develop everything that dwells within him. The order which he needs will then always come of itself out of his liberty. For this reason the organ of individualistic Anarchism, Liberty, founded by one of the

* "Dokumente der Frauen," a new periodical published in Vienna by Augusta Fickert, Marie Lang, and Rosa Mayreder. Vol. I, No. 1, March 8, 1899.

"Die Frauenfrage." A discussion between Victor Yarros and Sarah E. Holmes.

best of libertarians, bears for motto: "Liberty, not the daughter, but the mother of order."

Out of the spirit that gave rise to Liberty is born also the pamphlet: "Die Frauenfrage. Eine Discussion zwischen Victor Yarros und Sarah E. Holmes." (The German translation was recently published by B. Zack, SO. Oppelnerstr. 45, Berlin.) Read this pamphlet if you want a really *unbiased* expression on the woman question. There are many who will learn for the first time from this pamphlet what it is to be unprejudiced. They will see how contracted is the circle which they survey with their State bred notions. Two persons here speak with, and partly against, one another, to whom liberty is really a vital necessity,—who have a conception of liberty compared with which the twaddle about liberty by the "liberals" is mere childishness. Do not ask me to review the contents. Whoever wishes to know the contents, let him read this pamphlet, which has only seventeen pages and contains more than all the bulky books of the brilliant, but thoroughly prejudiced, Treitschke. One breathes here the pure natural air of the spirit, and is glad, for a brief space, to be out of the suffocating atmosphere of scribedom, which exhales only the past. Whoever has rescued out of the slavery of our religious, political, and social orders *one* thing, the love of liberty, will take a fresh breath when he follows the expositions of this pamphlet.

The Critics on Oscar Wilde's Poem.

Continued from page 5.

one: the jewel, blessed of God, which had adorned his angel's crown, sank deep into his flat head and became embedded in the flesh. The serpent in rage would mangle his head against the rocks, but the gem was harder than adamant. He would bury himself in slime and cover it with mud, but filth could not dim the lustre of the jewel. And that, say the Orientals, is Satan's eternal torment, that he can never be wholly evil or wholly lost; that through every degradation he must carry the birthmark of heaven, the signet of the sons of God. Genius can never be wholly wasted. The man who possesses it may be the sorriest wretch the sun shines upon, he may distort and torture and strangle it, but from the depths it cries unto God. Men have tried to destroy their gifts by trampling them in the mud before Wilde's day, but usually the good in them has outlived the evil, for it is the plan and intention of the universe that good shall outlive evil. In Master Villon's day his doings made him deservedly unpopular in Paris, but to-day we read the 'Ballade of Dead Women' gratefully, and charge him not with the hen-roosts that he robbed or the throats he cut. When old William Wycherly wallowed on a dung-heap in a London alley, he was in bad odor, even in the theatre, but every season or so Miss Rehan revives 'The Country Girl' at Daly's, and we enjoy it none the less because of its author's misdoings. The world prefers its genius without mud when it can get it, but we are so poor in these things that eventually we are often forced to take the mud to get the genius, and are glad enough to get it at all. Certainly, though, Mr. Wilde might have given us a little more of the former and much less of the latter. A little more respect for his high talent, a little more sincerity, a little less masquerading, and, as he wrote a dozen years ago,

> The mighty nations would have crowned me,
> Who are crownless now and without a name,
> And some Orient dawn had found me
> On the threshold of the House of Fame.

"But it was on the prison steps dawn found him, and without a name indeed—C. 3. 3!"

Cincinnati Commercial Tribune: "To make much of a poem which was written by no other than Oscar Wilde—a poem that is like a curse—may seem to his enemies astonishing. However, there are two reasons why 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' is worth attention. In the first place, to the mere student it is a matter of delight that one more writer, when confronted by a poetical situation, has expressed it in verse, not contorted it into prose. Secondly, the poem itself, in parts, deserves consideration as literature. . . . The style of the poem is derived largely from Coleridge, especially that marvellous passage where the mariner sees the demoniac woman, 'white as leprousie.' The subject, of course, is also allied to that of the 'Mariner.' The weak features arise from a vein of affectation which appears at several places and gives a Swinburnian cast to some of the stanzas. In these places one feels that the sincerity of the passage is of the artist only,—that the man behind the artist is indifferent. But, in spite of its defects, the ballad is a remarkable production, one which again demonstrates that the power of verse is unique and wonderful."

Chicago Times-Herald: "The purest and sweetest rills of poetry have often flowed from muddiest sources. François Villon, disreputable in his life and associations, was yet the author of the immortal refrain: 'Where are the snows that fell last year?' And here to day is a poem almost worthy of Coleridge, signed by the prison number of a man whom Villon would have kicked out of that 'home' which he sings with such sad humor in another celebrated ballade. 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' is written in memoriam of C. T. W., sometime trooper of the Royal Horse Guards, hanged on July 7, 1896, for the murder of the woman that he loved. The doomed man is introduced in verses whose simple words are portentous with a gloomy realism that reminds us of Tom Hood's 'Eugene Aram.' . . . . 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' will live. It is a lyric of unmistakable quality, and will not easily be dislodged from its unique niche in literature. It is, more than anything else, a plea for the divine quality of poetry, which, oftener than any other form of expression, betrays the angel of man's higher nature masquerading in leprous flesh. The impulse toward beauty and sweetness may be hidden even in corruption. A pansy seed will sprout and bloom in a pile of garbage."

Portland Oregonian: "Simplicity and repetition are the keynotes of the ballad. Some of it is so bitter as to make one shudder. . . . . There is much unnecessary gloating over 'great gouts of blood,' and blood flows freely, or, rather, spurts in 'gouts,' on every page. The poem bears unmistakable signs of genius, and is a strong document if half it tells of the horrors of prison life at Reading are true."

Pittsburg Press: "B. R. Tucker, of New York, has just published one of the most remarkable poems of recent times. . . . . The author depicts the manner in which the condemned man, as his days gradually became fewer, used to peer into the heavens with a vision that was not of this earth, giving the impression that, although his body still was allowed to linger here, his spirit, his real life, had already passed to the great beyond. Perhaps one of the most impressive parts of the poem is that which depicts the feeling of the prisoners on the day of the execution. Instead of being called to work at the usual hour, they were detained in their respective cells. At eight o'clock they heard the funeral bell commence to toll, and all knew what it meant. As if by instinct, each of the hundreds of prisoners, some callous and cold, some hard and cruel, some suffering for deeds of which they were innocent, each one of them dropped on the stone floor of their cells and remained in prayer while the life of the poor soldier was being offered up as an expiation for his crime. The author maintains the other prisoners felt far more keenly the agonies of the execution than the victim himself did, and that for many nights previously very few of them were able to sleep, as they were constantly seeing visions of the gallows before them, and hearing the never-to-be-forgotten thud made by the criminal as the bolt was slipped and he was ushered into eternity. The last part of the poem, by many, will be altogether accepted as true. Wilde himself, during his trial and afterward, maintained he was innocent of the crime with which he was charged. In this poem, therefore, he has reasoned from his own particular case and generalized it, coming to the conclusion that all in prisons are martyrs and that they are the innocent victims of a cruel society. It may be regarded as true that every year a certain number of innocent persons are incarcerated, and this will continue until the perfect stage of civilization has been reached. But those who are craving for a sensation, and who are anxious to know how those who are imprisoned regard it, will do well to make themselves the possessors of this weird and pathetic ballad of a jailed one."

Chicago Inter Ocean: "The causeway at Venice, connecting the Doge's palace and the State prisons, was known as the 'Bridge of Sighs,' so called because the condemned passed over it on the way to execution. A note affixed by the poet Byron to the description of Venice, in his 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,' calls attention to the cruelties perpetrated in the prisons, in the contemplation of which, he says, one may find 'consolation for the extinction of patrician power.' It has been left, however, for the rigid standards of to day to assert that the probable criminality of the inmates of these foul, black cells (to which neither light nor air was admitted) placed them altogether outside the pale of human pity. Ruskin dares to assert that 'no prisoner whose sorrows deserved sympathy ever crossed that Bridge of Sighs,' and Howells declares that the only sufferers on the Bridge of Sighs were 'housebreakers, cutpurse knaves, and murderers.' . . . . However, leaving mawkish pity out of the question, we are inclined to contend that the bridge was well named, for, if ever a man may be permitted to waste breath in sighing, surely it is when he is about to yield up that breath as a penalty to outraged law. As to whether he may not even then claim divine pity, the words uttered by the Saviour to the dying thief on the cross may be supposed to settle that question. . . . We are led to thoughts such as these by reading 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol.' . . . One cannot doubt that it is a veritable product of prison experience. Little need here be said of Mr. Wilde. A young man of good ability and education, excessive vanity led him to seek notoriety by posing as a devotee of what he called æsthetic culture. That phase exhausting its popularity, its leader was forced to turn his attention to more serious occupation, and he produced through the magazines some clever work in essays and poetry. He had married a thoroughly good and sensible young woman, and, just when readers were conjecturing whether Oscar Wilde might not yet prove himself capable of a worthy career in literature, that career was ended under an avalanche of unspeakable shame. . . . . How bitterly this man repented his folly and wickedness this poem seems to show, many lines of which are plainly the cries of a stricken soul from the depths of a very hell of anguish. . . . . As a poem, setting aside a few blemishes, it is in truth one of the finest in the language. It is a terribly realistic picture (first) of the horrors of prison life and (second) of the remorse that tortures a guilty soul when it comes to realize the disgrace which it has incurred. . . . In reading 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' we are reminded of Hood's fine poem of 'Eugene Aram,' both through resemblance in topic and in metre, and must admit that this is much the stronger poem of the two. For Hood's delineation of a murderer's remorse was drawn solely from his imagination, while this man writes of mental agonies which he not only witnessed, but himself suffered. We feel that his lines could only be written by one who had sinned and suffered, who had not become hardened in crime, but who was fully conscious from what heights, and to what depths, he had fallen. Moreover, he cannot avoid the personal note, if he would, and, when he classifies the prison inmates as 'the fool, the fraud, the knave,' it is easy to understand in which category he places himself. . . . . Although strict criticism might find blemishes in this poem, and may be offended at its gruesome subject, its strength is unquestionable. And perhaps it has no more striking lines than those in which the writer depicts the horrors of prison life, and the effect which it has upon men, though happily with some it leads to repentance."

Chicago Chronicle: "Whatsoever else Wilde may have been, or may be, he is unquestionably a man of intellectual force, of vivid imagination, and gifted with the power of writing genuine poetry. . . . This ballad is penetrated with the spirit of grim, blood-curdling tragedy, and many of its lines are among the most impressively powerful that English verse has produced for many a day."